

Dungeness Road Decommissioning and Stabilization Project

The Olympic NF received \$85.0 in PCWP funding for the Dungeness watershed in fiscal year 2001. The priority determined by the watershed council for the Dungeness (Dungeness River Management Team or DRMT) and Olympic National Forest was to apply these and other additional needed funds toward decommissioning and stabilizing forest roads on the Olympic National Forest. In the winter 1999, this area experienced a major storm event, resulting in an extensive number of road-related landslides, washouts and sedimentation into valued aquatic habitat in the mainstem of the Dungeness River. Fish listed as threatened under ESA include Chinook, summer chum, and bull trout. The project area directly influences Chinook and bull trout spawning/rearing habitat. Summer chum are present lower in the basin, indirectly affected by road-related sedimentation. NMFS has designated all anadromous habitats accessible to Chinook as critical habitat, extending to river mile 18.7.

The goal of this project is to minimize future road-related delivery of coarse/fine sediment inputs to anadromous spawning and rearing habitat in the Dungeness River. Objectives are to improve hillslope hydrology, reduce potential of management-related mass wasting and surface erosion from roads.

The cost associated with all of this critical work far exceeded the funding that was available in the forest allocation and Emergency Roads, Federally Owned (FHA). By capitalizing on the strong partnerships and support the Olympic National Forest has in watershed, we were able to obtain a WA state Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB) IAC grant, which has greatly assisted in accomplishing all of the restoration project goals. It was recognized by the SRF Board that this project was unique, with its numerous partnership contributions, working collaboratively toward common goals, would lead to a successful project that would improve the habitat for threatened fish stocks.

An Environmental Assessment which began November 2000 was completed June 2001. The decision to decommission a popular route in the upper Dungeness Recreation area, reducing access to two trailheads, and elimination of a popular campground was very controversial, and public involvement was extensive.

The road decommissioning consists of removing culverts, unstable fillslopes, ripping road surface, and outsloping segments. Soil bioengineering techniques for soil stabilization will also be performed. Road stabilization will allow for motorized vehicles to continue using the roads, and consists of removing unstable fills, select outsloping, and improvement of drainage structures. Implementation will result in decommissioning approximately 3.4 miles of road, of which 0.4 miles will be converted to a trail. In addition to the decommissioning, this alternative will stabilize approximately 6.3 miles of road, repair seven flood damage sites, and decommission a 10 site campground located adjacent to the mainstem river.

In addition to the decommissioning and stabilization project on the forest, a restoration monitoring contract and second iteration watershed analysis contract were also awarded for evaluating effectiveness of the treatments, and identifying future restoration opportunities.